

EUPHORBIA MILII PLANT NAMED 'RHEA'

Latin name of the genus and species of the plant claimed:

*Euphorbia milii* Desmoul.

Variety denomination:

5      Rhea

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present Invention relates to a new and distinct cultivar of *Euphorbia milii* plant, botanically known as *Euphorbia milli* Desmoul., commonly known by the name Crown of Thorns, and hereinafter referred to by the name 'Rhea'.

10        The new *Euphorbia milii* is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the Inventor, Steen Thomsen, in Haarslev, Fyn, Denmark. The new *Euphorbia milii* originated from a polycross made in 2001 by the Inventor with unnamed cultivars of *Euphorbia milii* Desmoul.. The male and female parental cultivars are unnamed, unpatented seedlings of *Euphorbia milii* Desmoul.. The  
15        Inventor selected the new *Euphorbia milii* cultivar from the progeny of the above crossing in 2001 on the basis of flower color and compact, freely branching habit. Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* are more upright, compact and have a unique color and abundant, small flowers.

A sexual reproduction of the new cultivar by terminal cuttings taken and  
20        propagated and trial production batches in Denmark, has shown that the unique

features of this new *Euphorbia milii* are stable and reproduce true to type in many successive generations.

#### BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined
- 5 to be the unique characteristics of 'Rhea'. These characteristics in combination distinguish 'Rhea' as a new and distinct cultivar:
1. Pink floral bract color from RHS 69C to RHS 68A.
  2. Very dense and bushy plant form.
  3. Vigorous but limited growth habit.
  - 10 4. Small flowers on thick yellow-green peduncles RHS 195A

Plants of the cultivar 'Rhea' can be compared to plants of the cultivar *Euphorbia milii* 'Themis'. In side-by-side comparisons conducted by the Inventor in Haarslev, Denmark, plants of the cultivar 'Rhea' and the cultivar 'Themis' differ in the following characteristics:

- 15 1. Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* have pink colored bracts and staminate cyathia with yellow green-margined glands.
2. Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* have smaller dark green leaves.
3. Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* have shorter and stiffer peduncles than plants of the cultivar 'Themis'.

4. Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* are more compact than the plants of the cultivar 'Themis'

Plants of the cultivar 'Rhea' have not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. The phenotype may vary somewhat with variations in 5 environment such as temperature, light intensity, day length, and fertility level without, however, any variance in genotype.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The accompanying color photographs illustrate the overall appearance and details of flower form, color and structures of the new cultivar, showing the 10 colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type. Colors in the photographs may differ slightly from the color values cited in the detailed botanical description, which more accurately describe the actual colors of the new *Euphorbia milii*.

The first photograph shows a side view of a typical flowering plant of 15 'Rhea', as grown in an 11 cm pot. The second photograph is a top view of the flowering plant of 'Rhea'. The third photograph is a close-up of the young and older floral cymes of 'Rhea'.

#### DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

In the following description, color references are made to The Royal 20 Horticultural Society Colour Chart, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, where general terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used. Plants were grown under greenhouse conditions.

Plants used for this description were grown for about 16 weeks after cutting and

produced in 11 cm pots. Other pot sizes can be used and the plants are intended for indoor use or as a bedding plant in temperate climates although it is a perennial garden plant in tropical and subtropical areas.

Botanical classification: *Euphorbia milii* Desmoul. cultivar 'Rhea'. Euphorbiaceae,

5 Spurge family

Parentage:

Female parent: Unnamed seedling of *Euphorbia milii*

Male parent: Unnamed seedling of *Euphorbia milii*

Propagation:

10 Type cutting: Terminal vegetative cuttings taken from plants kept in the vegetative stage by shading and high temperatures (25C).

Time to initiate roots: About 10 to 14 days at 18 to 21 C in tunnels in a greenhouse.

Root description: Fine, well branched.

15 Plant description:

Form: Perennial plant with upright plant habit. *Euphorbia milii* 'Rhea' flowers in cymes with cyathia subtended by colored bracts. Freely branching with about 8 lateral flowering branches forming at every node; dense and bushy. Stems are square to pentagonal with ridges about 10 mm thick at the base. By each node appear groups

of thorns: 1 large 7 mm and 2 smaller 3 mm. Young thorns are yellow-green: 151A; while the older ones becomes stiffer and changes color to gray-brown (197B)

Crop time: After rooting, about 16 weeks are required to produce finished flowering plants in 11 cm pots.

5 Plant height (soil level to top of plant plane): About 8 cm. Width: 12 cm

Vigor: Vigorous growth rate.

Foliage description: Leaves alternate, single, obovate, entire, craspedromous venation.

Size: Length: 5 cm. Width: About 30 mm

10 Apex: Acute

Base: Cuneate to almost decussate

Texture: Smooth, waxy, dull, glabrous

Color: Young foliage, upper and lower surfaces: 146C and N144D, yellow-green. Mature foliage, upper and lower surfaces: 137A and 147C respectively. Venation, 137C.  
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Flower description:

Flower arrangement and shape: Floral arrangements composed of cymes. The flowers (cyathia) are starkly reduced so only a gland and the reproductive organs are present. Subtending the cyathia are two colored bracts. The flowers are further

complicated by the unique feature of funnel shaped floral buds appearing at the base of the bracts in two or more layers.

- Natural flowering season: Continuous throughout the spring and summer in subtropical and tropical regions. In colder climates season can be extended 5 by greenhouse production with high temperatures and supplementary irradiance.
- Flower longevity on the plant: Longevity of individual flowers is highly dependent on temperature and light conditions 5 to 9 weeks. Bracts turn green with age. Entire cymes drop after withering.
- Inflorescence size: Diameter: About 3x4 cm, height: 7 cm
- 10 Flowers: 3 mm diameter, Bracts: overlapping at base, ovoid to inverted cordate 10 x 12 mm, pink color from 69A, to 68A (red-purple group).
- Glands: 5 from 29A shiny orange to 151B yellow-green during development.
- Anthers: Appear after flowers mature; stamen color 71B, red-purple and pollen color 5A, yellow.
- 15 Pistil and stigma: Appear before cyathia mature; color 70AC, red-purple.
- Peduncle: Strength: soft. Length: About 5 cm. Diameter: About 3 mm. Color: 146C, green at an angle of 30°
- Pedicels: 5 mm long, 2 mm thick strong color: 146C, yellow-green

Weather tolerance: Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* have exhibited good tolerance to draught, rain and wind, however flowering may cease during cold and dark periods (<15C)

Pest tolerance: Plants of the new *Euphorbia milii* have exhibited good tolerance to following fungi: Mildew, and Thivaliopsis. Also, they appear to be less infected by Thrips (Franklinellea)